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ABSTRACT

Four papers focus on the processes involved in developing a community team for providng services to handicapped preschoolers. Jerry Elder and Elynor Kazuk review steps in beginning a community team approach in "Getting Started," including the mechanics of planning and conducting an initial meeting to explain the advantages of collaborative planning and service delivery. "Developing An Understanding of the Community," by Ronald Wiegerink, considers problems and issues involved in determining the service needs of a community. John Pelosi, in "Planning for Action," describes the steps to be taken for the eventual specification of goal statements based on specific problem areas. In the final paper, "Human Factors in Interagency Teams," Phyllis Magrab addresses such topics as leadership, role clarification, and group atmosphere and the decisionmaking process. (CL)

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DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY TEAM

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DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY TEAM

A Companion to the

Community Workbook for

Collaborative Services to

Preschool Handicapped Children

Prepared for HEW Interagency Task Force, under Grant #54-P-71476/3-02 by American Association of University Affiliated Programs; Phyllis Magrab, Jerry Elder, Ellie Kazuk, John Pelosi and Ronald Wiegerink.

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CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED

Introduction

In most communities, it is relatively easy for a group or individual to contact another group or individual and ask for cooperation in getting a task done. Individuals, programs, and agencies will usually help each other if the task does not entail additional time, changing current policies or procedures or implementing plans with unclear outcomes. Initiating a community collaborative effort, however, does require time and resources and the collaborative goals of the project are often clouded in the beginning stages. Therefore, getting started can be a more difficult task than might be anticipated. The purpose of this section is to make the initial process steps easier in organizing the first community team meeting and getting individuals and agencies interested in participation in the effort. Four process steps are addressed:

a) Clarifying a purpose for the initial meeting,
b) Deciding who should be invited to participate,
c) Selecting the appropriate method for inviting participants, and
d) Planning and conducting the initial meeting.

If this preliminary planning is done carefully, the enthusiasm that one or two individuals generate around the value of collaboration will spread to a larger group and that group can become a cohesive working team to significantly impact the delivery of services to handicapped children in the community.

Purposes of Initial Meeting

One of the basic purposes of the initial meeting is to get-acquainted and explain the advantages of collaborative planning and service delivery. Even in a small community and also with the rapid turnover of staff, it is likely the level of awareness about services provided by each other's programs is fairly low. This initial meeting will serve to wet the appetite of these individuals to learn more about what services other individuals, agencies and programs provide.

Another purpose of the initial meeting is to promote the advantages of collaboration, and for a community to decide whether it can benefit from such a planning process and later on delivering services through this mechanism. This requires a discussion of the ways the community can benefit from collaborative efforts. A further delineation along this line is to identify the common problems that can be minimized through cooperative working arrangements. Everybody at the meeting will be acutely aware of problems in delivering services to handicapped children; therefore, the initial meeting might also bring these problems to the surface and begin a discussion around how they can be minimized through collaborative working arrangements.

The final and most important purpose for the initial meeting is to persuade participants that collaboration can indeed improve services to handicapped children. Though the advantages of collaboration should be apparent, there may be a few sceptics in the audience who will need to be persuaded that this is an appropriate approach. The decision that collaboration can, indeed, improve services to handicapped children whould be a group decision of the participants in the community.

Deciding who Should be Invited to Initial Meeting

Once the purposes of the initial meeting are determined, who should be invited to attend must be decided. Should it be the major groups serving handicapped children so the group can remain relatively small? Or should the initial meeting involve an array of agencies, private providers and organizations as well as consumers and interested citizens? Should individuals from the local level only be included or also from state and regional offices? Assuming one or two groups are taking the lead in organizing this effort, this core group needs to make some preliminary decisions regarding who else should be initially invited to participate. The following paragraphs discuss the questions above and other major considerations in making this decision.

1) What geographical boundaries should be used?

Chapter 2, "Developing an Understanding of the Community," discusses this issue in detail as one which the entire community team might wish to address in determining the parameters of the collaborative effort. This issue must also be considered when deciding who to invite to the initial meeting albeit not in as much detail at this point.

In most communities, the boundaries (catchment areas) of various groups differ from group to group. One group may serve one county alone while another might serve a cluster of counties. School districts often cross county lines and providers such as

pediatricians from the private sector may have no defined boundaries at all. The host group or groups must decide how broad the boundaries will be for this initial meeting. One way of solving the problem is to invite all those groups or individuals having jurisdiction for handicapped children and their families in the primary "core" community, town or village in the area. These participants can then take a closer look at their respective catchment areas, as suggested in Chapter 2, and decide if the geographical boundaries should be expanded. It is always easier to expand boundaries and invite more participants than to limit the area after the initial invitation.

2) What is the general target population?

This issue will also have to be handled in more detail by the entire community team. But initially, the host group needs to decide the general target population. Will all handicapped children be included in the effort or just certain age groups, such as 0 to 3 or 3 to 6? Will all handicaps be included or will the categories be limited to those having the most numbers? Will the mild and moderate handicaps as well as the severe or just the severe be considered? Again, the same rule might apply to this decision as the previous one: that it is easier to start with a small group and grow than it is to decrease the number of participants after you have met. For the initial meeting, you may wish to invite only those groups or individuals that concentrate on a number of handicaps rather than those that serve primarily one type. The group can later determine who to add - once a goal is set - and the available resources are determined.

3) What type of groups should be included?

The Community Workbook, lists the key agencies in any community which have federal mandates for serving handicapped children. Five major agencies should definitely be included in the initial meeting. After that, the list of possible participants is long and varied depending upon the group's initial purpose, catchment area and target population. The list of invitees includes pediatricians and private providers of services; consumers and consumer agencies; specialists in areas such as advocacy, planning or financial aid; local officials; religious and community leaders and any number of local and state government programs which provide support and/or service to the target

population. Usually, the initial group plays the role of a steering committee in the beginning stages of the project. The size of this group should be limited to a working number of fifteen people. If the group becomes larger, small subgroups can be appointed as working task forces to function in different areas.

Included in this decision regarding the type of group is the question of whether to invite state and/or regional agencies at this point. Individuals from these offices can often serve as valuable resources throughout the various stages of the community team development. If they might add prestige to the effort or assist in any other manner in bringing people together and thinking through the issues, include them in the initial invitation. If, however, the local community might act autonomously and might see the involvement as "interference", then the question of inviting these individuals should be postponed.

4) What level of authority should be represented?

Initially, it is important to include the decision makers of all participating groups. Establishing the future of the group and gaining commitments of time and resources is often difficult if the person who attends cannot immediately speak for the agency or program. Some decision-makers may not be able to continue meeting indefinitely and will eventually send a representative in their place. But at the beginning, their involvement and understanding is important and all invitations should be directed specifically to them.

Methods for Inviting Participants

The method of inviting participants can have a significant impact on the actual turn-out at the initial meeting. There are two basic questions the host group must consider: Who should do the inviting and how should it be done? Deciding the answers to these questions requires an assessment of the politics, personalities and general social dynamics involved in the community. Where does the inviting group fit in the political scheme of things? Does it have "clout" with other groups? Will heads not respond to the invitation unless another agency head does the inviting? Are there historical feuds or personality clashes that might make one group question the motives of the host group in doing the initial organizing? Has this kind of effort been tried before and with what success? Will that tend to make groups shy away from getting involved?

Who Should Extend the Invitation

Because it is often hard to look at the political and social climate regarding community cooperation and to assess one's own place in the community, it is a good idea to seek the cooperation of one or two other groups in serving as hosts at the initial meeting and determining how the invitation might be made to assure the best turn-out. One or two politically astute individuals from these groups can decide on one of the following alternatives for extending the invitation:

1) One of the group heads can sign and/or deliver the invitation.

2) An "outside group", such as a University Affiliated Facility or a Resource Access Project (RAP), can be asked to host the group.

3) An influential community leader can be approached to extend the invitation.

4) A core group of three or four group heads can jointly sign an invitation.

5) The initial meeting coordinator(s) can extend the invitation.

How Should the Invitation be Extended

Once it is decided who should extend the invitation, the question of how it should be delivered must be addressed. It is recommended that a two-step approach be used. Step one is to call or visit the decision-maker of each group and personally elicit support for the concept and for participation at the initial meeting. Step two is to follow-up with a written invitation giving the specifics on where and when the meeting will take place.

During step one, it is important to emphasize to the potential participant that the intention and goal of the meeting is not to benefit any one group but to explore how a community effort might benefit all those serving the target population. Also, assure the decision-maker that the group will decide whether or not there is value in a continued effort and that the commitment at this point is only to the first meeting, not to an indefinite amount of time. Mention also who else has been invited and who has shown an interest in participating in the beginning stages of the community effort. Remember that the primary goal during step one is to obtain the interest of the decision-makers and to determine a convenient time when he/she could attend an initial meeting. Step two, using this approach, is merely a formality which confirms step one and provides necessary information.

Other approaches can be used but they are less successful in getting people to attend. These include:

1) Sending an invitation which stimulates curiosity and offers an opportunity to meet others socially.

2) Gathering numerical data such as that described in Section II of the Community Workbook and then inviting individuals and groups who provided statistics to a meeting to share the results of the data.

3) Sending a written invitation to discuss or plan a specific topic or task of interest to a number of groups, such as applying jointly for a grant; planning a lobbying effort to influence state legislature in favor of the community; sharing a data system; or clarifying or defining terms so all groups are operating under the same definitions.

Selecting any of these approaches requires an awareness of the general climate regarding coordination in the community and a sense of whether face-to-face invitations, written invitations or both would assure a good turn-out of the key agencies, programs and individuals serving handicapped children.

Planning and Conducting Initial Meeting

The initial meeting of service providers and administrators in a community is a critical component in establishing local collaboration. It sets the tone for either cooperative or uncooperative working relationships among these individuals. A low-key, nonthreatening approach needs to be taken in planning and conducting this meeting.

When to Hold It

The meeting should be scheduled at a time when it is anticipated a majority of the individuals being invited will be able to attend. If possible, convenient times should be discussed with participants before the invitations are sent and then a time set which meets most individuals' schedule. Ascertain in your community when various groups hold staff meetings and try to avoid these times. If funds are available to pay for food, it is helpful to plan the meeting around an early morning or noon meal. A free meal always gets a few more people to attend and the atmosphere is much more relaxed and friendly when food is served. If a specific day is not convenient, consideration should be given to an evening meeting. Weekend meetings, at least

for the initial one, should be avoided. The time of day selected should find the participants alert, attentive and with a minimum of conflict about other obligations.

Where Should It Be Held

If a meal is to be served, a local hotel or restaurant might be selected. If no meal is involved, then meeting rooms in a community center, bank or some other organization that has conference space is satisfactory. Location of the initial meeting must be on neutral territory. Care must be taken at all times to avoid making the initial meeting appear to be something that might benefit a particular group.

Whatever facility is chosen, the meeting room should be well-ventilated, bright and have pleasant surroundings. Chairs and tables should be arranged in a modified U so individuals face each other. If tables are not used, form the chairs in a circle. The atmosphere should be relaxed, pleasant and informal. Every effort should be made to have the participants at ease and in a receptive frame of mind.

Who Should Host and Conduct the Meeting

The person coordinating the initial meeting should be someone skilled in dealing with groups. Hopefully this can be the director of the group calling the initial meeting. The individual should be respected by other service providers in the community and firmly believe in a collaborative approach to services. The tone of the meeting will be set by the leader. If this person demonstrates belief and confidence in a collaborative approach, then individuals in the audience will react accordingly. The personal interest, enthusiasm and dedication of this individual is crucial to the success of this first meeting.

Developing Agenda Based on Specific Purpose

The agenda of the initial meeting will vary depending on the purpose of the meeting. The agenda for the first meeting should be included in the initial letter sent to invited participants.

The first item should be a brief welcome by the coordinator and an explanation of the role of the agency responsible for the initial meeting (5 minutes). Care should be taken to explain that this group's role is a facilitative one of bringing interested individuals together to look at improving services for preschool handicapped children. Any reference to statements which may sound like the reason for the meeting is to improve the group's role or status in the community should be avoided at all costs.

After the welcome, the next order of business which does not have to be on the printed agenda is a get-acquainted exercise (60 minutes). Chances are, not all individuals at the meeting know each other. One idea is to go around the room asking the individual to address him/herself to the items listed in Exhibit 1. If an overhead is used, this should be shown on a transparency. If not, copies should be distributed to the participants. To prevent any filibustering, a time limit should be set for each individual speaker. Depending upon the number of individuals present, these introductions should be kept to 3-5 minutes each.

The third item on the agneda should be an explanation of the meeting (15 minutes) purpose and potential benefits of community collaboration. Again, if an overhead projector is used, a transparency (Exhibit 2) should be prepared to show the potential benefits of collaboration. If an overhead is not used, copies of Exhibit 2 can be distributed to participants.

Another item may be to relate to the audience some of the successful practices experienced at other sites (30-60 minutes). National data relating to incidence and prevalence of handicapping conditions and how these figures might relate to unidentified handicapped children in the community or local data if it is available also is useful to discuss (15-30 minutes).

The last item on the agenda should be a determination of where to go from this initial meeting (25 minutes). It will usually take from 2-4 meetings to develop the planning process and assign responsibilities for who will carry out specific aspects of planning for services to handicapped children in the community. One approach is to obtain a commitment from individuals attending the meeting to meet for a certain number of additional meetings to structure the planning process and assign responsibilities. There should be group consensus for this and care should be taken not to force this action onto the participants. Considerations for forming a planning group and steps for carrying out the process are contained in subsequent chapters.

EXHIBIT 1

DURING THE TIME WE ARE SHARING WHO WE ARE, PLEASE BRIEFLY INCLUDE INFORMATION LISTED BELOW:

1. SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF.

2. YOUR CONNECTION (AGENCY, PROGRAM, OR INDIVIDUAL) WITH PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND/OR THEIR NEEDS.

3. A ONE-LINER ON YOUR GROUP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE OR MANDATE.

4. WHAT FEDERAL, STATE OR OTHER FUNDING SOURCE OR CONNECTION YOUR GROUP CURRENTLY HAS.

EXHIBIT 2

SOME POTENTIAL BENEFITS ARE:

- BETTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT INFORMATION FOR PROGRAM PLANNING.
- MORE EFFECTIVE AGENCY USE (MORE APPROPRIATE REFERRALS).
- GREATER AWARENESS OF WHAT OTHER AGENCIES CAN DO.
- EARLIER DIAGNOSIS OF CHILDREN WHICH WILL HELP YOU IN RECRUITING CHILDREN FOR PROGRAMS.
- OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING.
- EXTENDING THE LIMITED HUMAN SERVICE RESOURCES.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMUNITY

What is the Community?

An answer to this question may prove more elusive than one would at first think. When one meets with agency representatives from the community it usually means a specific city, town, or area in a city, e.g., neighborhood. However, one soon discovers that each of the groups represented has different community areas, catchments, or geographical boundaries in which it delivers services. Education might have a city or county-wide school district, mental health might have a multi-county catchment area, the citizens action program might have a low income area of the city, social services may have a county-wide program, etc. The service boundaries of these groups are rarely the same and create a patchwork design on a map. This makes the development of a common target area or community area of services difficult to determine. The development of a commonly agreed upon community target area, however, provides an excellent first activity for a community task force. This is so because it results in a usable product, provides opportunities for sharing of agency information, requires compromises and group decisions, and can involve a process that can lead to group cohesiveness.

One method for doing this would be to have each group and service provider outline its catchment area on a common geographical map. This will reveal both overlapping areas and areas where only one or two agencies provide services. This map presents the range of alternatives for defining the target area: on one hand, it could be the outlined area that encompasses all the service areas; on the other hand, it could be a much smaller, overlapping area that has the majority of service providers in it. Most often the best choice would be somewhere between the two, say city boundaries which include more service providers or sections of the city or town for more targeted operation.

What are the Community Needs?

Once the community task force has agreed on the community target area, plans need to be made to determine community needs, resources, and services. A variety of approaches can be used to study these, each of which has its own costs and benefits. Because there is no right or wrong way to conduct such a community assessment per se, it will be up to the best judgment of the task force to decide which method is best for its purposes and the community.

The range of options for a needs and resource assessment includes: (1) a community opinion survey; (2) an agency data survey; and (3) a compilation of leaders' opinions. The first approach, that of a survey, could be conducted by a community team by phone or door-to-door. By choosing a fairly representative sample, it would be possible to keep the numbers of the survey quite small--say 100 to 200 families. By targeting families in need through agency client lists, the numbers could be reduced even more and still provide representation. Questions about what services they have used, need, know about, would use, neighbors need, etc. could provide a data base for community task force decision making.

The second approach is more common and consists of each agency and service provider identifying its services, the numbers served, waiting lists, and projection of service needs. This can be a very time-consuming procedure because of differences in terminology regarding services and eligibility of clients. The Community Workbook has been designed to facilitate this approach.

The third approach consists of having each group or service provider identify its top service priorities and priority needs for services--say five of each. These could then be prioritized for the community by means of a group process such as the nominal group procedure (see the next section).

Each of these procedures has its costs and problems in terms of reliability and accuracy. However, each of them also provides enough data for the Community Task Force to take first steps to identify areas for action, e.g., need for more respite care. As a first step, any of the three will do, and if the following actions are pursued with flexibility and scrunity, the activities of the group should be able to define community needs ever more sharply.

Issues and Problems

There are a variety of problems and issues which crop up when one attempts to determine the service needs of a community. One area fraught with problems is the one of estimating the population in need. Although there are fairly reliable estimates of population size and income for the general population, estimates of the percentage of those with handicapping conditions are often unreliable and invalid. National estimates, such as the National Association of Retarded Childrens' estimate of 3% of the population as retarded or the Office of Special Education ceiling estimate of 12% of school age children being handicapped, are often too high and too general to apply to any specific community. Therefore, estimates, if needed, should be derived from the community taking into consideration local birth rates, income factors, and prevalence rates of populations being served already.

For example, the percentage of handicapped children being served by the local school district would afford a high estimate for preschool age children of those who could use intervention services. The percentage of those children born in that community with low Apgar scores could provide an estimate of at-risk children. Given the fact that prevalence of children and families in need is often as much a factor of services available as it is of some specific condition or disability, estimates remain simply that -- estimates. Their purposes are primarily for planning and promotion and should be seen from beginning to end as a part of the community political process of helping decide where resources should be spent rather than as absolute numbers.

Another area which has received much attention and funding during the last decade is that of child find and count-the-children efforts. Just as with estimates, these efforts can be misleading and indeed costly. While these programs are very well-intended and do indeed locate some additional children and families in need, they rarely add more than 5% to the existing service population no matter how expensive the effort. In most communities simply better publicity for effective services without waiting lists would do as well. Granted these efforts often produce indirect benefits such as community education and cooperation, but one must still consider the relative cost/effectiveness of these efforts in comparison to other methods, e.g., better community referral and joint screening.

Another problem in the area of assessing community needs and resources is that with the ever-changing service ecology of programs that respond to ever-changing funding patterns, today's data are soon out of date (see population data). Service programs that were not fully enrolled later become filled or closed. Therefore, in assessing the community needs and services, a futures factor needs to be added. Attempt to gain data and develop data trends which lead to estimating the needs and resources in the future such as five years from the analysis data. Recognize that such trends are not linear or simply straight lined, but instead will be affected by other trends in the community, e.g., increases or decreases in population, changes in funding climates, new priorities, etc. With these in mind, the linear projection can be modified to give a range of possibilities. Planning should take into consideration both high and low projections.

All actions taken by the community task force should be put to the test of cost/effectiveness and/or cost/benefit. While such data are rarely available, wise evaluators can lead to reasonable and workable estimates. Before a child find or community-wide resource assessment is concluded, the task force participants should ask what is the cost in terms of dollars and staff time and what are the likely

payoffs given different rates of return? What if 25% more families and children in need are discovered? What if no community service has service openings? Questions such as these need to be answered before a wild goose chase develops.

Outcomes

If the actions in this chapter are taken, the community task force should accomplish the following:

1) A designated and defined common target area.

2) An estimate of service needs.

3) An estimate of community resources.

4) A prioritized list of targeted needs.

5) A cohesive group involved in planning for the future.

6) A data and information base with which to plan.

CHAPTER 3

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Introduction

Planning for action is one of the most important functions of a community team. One of the problems faced by community groups is lack of concrete action. The team is formed out of a common need to define and discuss community problems in delivering services, but unless a systematic, goal directed, action oriented planning process is used, the team flounders and tends to slip further into inaction. If the team does not experience success in actually doing something that shows the results of its efforts, it will probably not stay together very long.

This chapter includes a description of steps to be taken to arrive at an Action Plan. It may not be necessary to follow each step in the exact manner described, but careful consideration should be given to why it should be excluded or modified. If something can be done more efficiently, do it, but make sure it is done in a way that will result in the desired outcome.

The planning process can be led by a team member. If that member is experienced in planning, using the member as the planning facilitator will not detract from the planning effort. Another thing to consider is the possibility of bringing in someone outside the group who has good experience in helping others develop action plans. A planning consultant to lead the team through the planning process can be useful. If the consultant is good, the team will be helped to stay on task in developing the plan itself, rather than pulling out one team member to facilitate the group. Planning consultants from the outside do not have to cost money. Practically every state human service agency has planning positions at some level of the bureaucracy. It may be possible to obtain a planner from Mental Health or Social Services or some other department to work with the team at no cost.

Whether the team uses an outside consultant or one of its own members, Action Planning is critical to team accomplishment. Action Planning helps the team "work smarter not harder." The rest of this section lists the steps in planning and how to carry out each step.

PHASE 1: Generate a List of Beliefs about the Team and Its Purposes

This is an important step for a variety of reasons: to initiate the process, to develop group cohesiveness, and to begin to establish a common goal. The way to carry out this step is to get the team together in a meeting and simply ask each member to think about and discuss the reasons why the team should be formed. Part of this discussion will have already taken place as a result of the activities in the initial meeting covered in the first chapter. Each member has some idea about why he or she is there, but it is important for the team to discuss as a group these reasons and beliefs about why they are organizing and what their focus is to be.

This phase helps to assure that everyone is there for the same reasons, i.e., to improve services for handicapped children. Different participants may have contradicting ideas about what the group can do and should do. As each member talks about his or her own expectations, the group will begin to form impressions about what can and cannot be done. The focus of this discussion should be on beliefs about the community team, why it should exist, what it should do, what specific population it should target, and how members can contribute to the team effort. Forming group consensus about this and making sure everyone is clear about it will avoid problems resulting from failure to communicate expectations that are not met.

This phase also helps to focus on the next phase, which is defining the mission of the team. The process of discussing beliefs about the team, its purpose and focus, will help the group to gain a perspective about the overall reason for why it should exist. This preliminary discussion of beliefs really helps to explore the possibilities. It helps to weed out some ideas that, though they may be good, may not be possible. Once sufficient exploration has been done, the group will be ready to define its mission. This phase should be carried out with all team members present. Everyone should contribute to this process and feel like he or she owns the results of it. Discussion should take place in a fairly informal way, but a flip-chart should be used to write down all of the belief statements. This makes them public to everyone. It also helps to clarify what is meant and strengthens communication.

Listing the belief statements helps people to remember them and to identify contradictions among them. The list can be refined and typed later. It can serve as a preamble to the overall plan of the group. The preamble lets others know what the team wants to do as well as keeps the team members on track about it. The list of beliefs can be revised periodically, to include new items and/or to discard the ones that are later seen not to fit. The important thing is to use it as a firm starting point that everyone has come to agree upon.

This phase should not take too long. Probably one or two hours is long enough for most groups. It could take longer if different people propose beliefs that contradict each other. If the process of resolving the difference is taking too long, try to get the parties involved to table the issue. On the other hand, if resolving the particular issue is vital to the productive formation of the group, than it must be resolved. Clearly defining the issue and taking a vote among the members is one way to resolve this type of problem.

It is usually a good idea to complete this phase and the next phase, defining the team mission, in the same meeting. These two phases can usually be completed in a morning or afternoon meeting set aside for this purpose.

PHASE 2: Specify the Team Mission

The outcome of this phase is to have a clear statement describing the mission of the team. The mission should be a simple, but complete sentence stating the purpose of the team.

> For example: It is the mission of the Galactic County Community Team to establish full, comprehensive services for all preschool children with special needs so they will be able to grow to their maximum potential.

Mission statements can be idealistic. It is worthwhile for the group to state how they want things to be, even if they know they can not get there right away. Two other important points can be made about the mission statement. First, it should include what the team seeks to do. In the example above, the team wants to "... establish full and comprehensive services...." Second, the mission should include something about the intended outcome of the team effort. The outcome in the example is children reaching their maximum potential. The way to achieve this outcome is to establish the services. This is an important point! If team members can begin to think in terms of what they want the outcome to be at this stage, then they will find it easier when they begin developing action plans.

The emphasis is placed on the wrong thing, too many times. For example, it is possible to think that setting up a new service for children is an outcome. It can be seen on a particular street, in a particular building, and has people doing things. But what is the focus of the activity? It should be on producing changes in the children that will help them grow? If that is true, why not state the outcome in terms of how the children will grow? The service is the means by which to obtain the outcome, the growth in children.

"Ninety-five percent of the children coming to the Koncrafnik Eye Clinic will leave with corrected vision" is an outcome. Setting up a new eye clinic is not an outcome; it is a means. Reminders about the above point will appear later in this section.

The mission serves as the overall guiding direction for the team's efforts. It is the link between the statement of beliefs and the subsequent activities engaged in by the team.

PHASE 3: Specify Problem Areas

Once the team has established how it wants things to be, it needs to take a look at what things are in the way of getting there. Where are the problems preventing children from reaching full potential within the scope of the community team and its resources? Each team member has fairly accurate information about what these problems are. Many have already been discussed and serve as some of the reasons why they want to be on the team.

The first thing to do is to elicit a full list of these problems from the team members. It is typical that the list will be so long that no one will know where to start. The second thing to do then, is to arrange the list in priority order. Once the list of problems is obtained and prioritized, this phase is done.

There are a variety of ways to complete the two steps to this phase. It is better to carry out both during a group meeting of the team than to poll each member, individually. The group interaction helps to stimulate the thinking process of each member. Team consensus about the priority listing of problems can be reached more quickly and easily in a group meeting.

One technique for completing the phase in a team meeting is called NOMINAL PROCEDURE. NOMINAL PROCEDURE is a technique that helps everyone in the group to contribute and ends up with a priority list of problems. Here is a brief description of how it works. The first step is to state a fairly concise question relating to the problems the group is trying to list. "What are the main problems preventing comprehensive services for pre-school handicapped children?" is an example of such a question. This question should be prepared before the meeting by the team leader working with one or two other members. Next, the question is presented to the team with the request that each member should think about and write down on a piece of paper anywhere from three to five problems. Each member, individually, makes his or her own list in the next ten to fifteen minutes. Once this is done, the leader asks each member, in round-robin fashion, to state his or her top

problems. Only one at a time should be allowed from each member. No discussion should be allowed during this time. There will be time for that later. Explain that to the team members in advance so they know the rules.

Each problem, given by each member, should be listed on flip chart paper until all problems are elicited from the team. As flip chart pages are filled up, they should be taped to the wall so everyone can see them.

Once the problems are listed, the leader should go through each one in order, asking if it is clearly stated and if everyone know what it means. The next thing is to group problems that seem to mean the same thing. After that the team is asked if they think the list is complete. Additional problems can be added at this time if someone thinks of one not listed.

When the team is satisfied that the list is complete and fully understood by everyone, it is time to rank them in priority order. The leader asks each person to review the list and to write down what he or she knows or believes to be the top three or four or five problems. If members are asked to pick the top four, they should assign four points to the top problem, three points to the next most important problem, two points to the next, and one to the last problem on their list. The last step is to find out how many points each problem was given by the total group. A weighted method is used to do this, by summing all the points given to each problem.

The outcome of this process, then, is a prioritized problem list. The group should be asked to look it over and see if they are satisfied with the list. This technique proves to be very effective with most groups. They see the process working to allow everyone's contribution to have a fair chance of being included. It most frequently results in consensus about the main problems. It produces a concrete product to view the end of the work session. Arriving at concrete products is a very good way to reinforce team efforts. (See exhibit 1 for guide for setting priorities.)

The prioritized list of problems provides the starting place for Action Planning. The top problems are the ones to work on first. The next step is to translate these top problems into goal statements.

PHASE 4: Translate Specific Problem Areas into Goal Statements

This step can be relatively easy, depending upon how the problems areas are stated. Generally, the problems list generated in Phase 3 will be made up of two types of problem statements. One type of statement will describe a problem directly

EXHIBIT 1

GUIDE TO SETTING PRIORITIES: NOMINAL GROUP PROCEDURE

Step 1: Silent Generation of Ideas in Writing

A. With groups of five to eight participants, hand out an 8 x 11 sheet of paper with a clear statement of the question or issue pertinent to that particular group typed on top of the sheet.

B. Request each person to individually make a list of responses to the issue typed on the sheet of paper. Request no talking. Let the participants know that their list will be shared with each other.

Step 2: Round Robin Recording of Ideas

C. The recorder (person conducting the procedure) lists on a flip chart each person's list of responses, one item at a time per person, round robin until all items from everyone's list is exhausted. Allow duplication, avoid discussion, justifications, etc. Number each item (1,2,3... n, n+1). Add ideas which participants think of during the recording process.

Step 3: Serial Discussion

D. The recorder reads each item and opens discussion for clarification and understanding. Items should not be eliminated. Duplications may be grouped (for example, items 3 and 4 may be grouped and treated as one item). Expression of support or oppositon to an item is encouraged, but no "arguments" or "debates" are permitted: the goal of this step is clarification and understanding of each item on the list.

Step 4: Vote

E. The recorder hands out five 3x5 cards to each participant. Have each person select and write, by name and number, one item per card, the five (or more) most important items. Once those five are chosen, give the most important item of those five a "5" and circle that number; the next most important item receives a "4" and so on down to the least important item receiving a "1".

F. The recorder prepares a tally sheet on the flip chart as follows:

PRIORITIES

I Item #	II Ranks assigned to item	III Sum of Ranks	IV No. of times the item mentioned	V Weighted Sum (III x IV)	VI Priorities
2	2, 1	3	2	6	3
14	3, 4, 1	8	3	24	2
7, 20	5, 5, 4	14	3	42	1
18	2	2	1	2	6
6	4	4	1	4	4
9	3	3	1	3	5
12	0	0	0	0	—

The recorder asks for the items (column I) and their ranks (column II) from each participant, round robin, one item at a time, starting with the most important item, i.e., that item receiving a rank of "5", and so on until each participant's list of five is exhausted.

The recorder sums the ranks (column II), multiplies that sum by the number of persons giving that item a rank (column IV), and the highest weighted sum (column V) is the top priority, the next highest sum the second from top, etc. (column VI). Example numbers are provided in the above table.

Step 5 & 6: Discussion and Revoting (optional)

Some errors are made due to misunderstanding or misinformation. If after the voting, there is a tremendous disparity in priorities it may be helpful to discuss the items again and revote.

affecting the lives of handicapped children. "Several preschool handicapped children are not receiving special educational services needed by them because existing programs are already full" is an example of the first type. The other type will be more indirect, and will describe a problem experienced by an agency, a group of agencies, or a problem between agencies. "There is a need to coordinate services between agencies X, Y, and Z" is an example of the second type.

Translating the first type of problem to a goal statement is relatively easy. The statement of need or problem is simply turned around to become a statement of intention: Goal 1 - To provide special educational services to all preschool handicapped children who need them to maximize their potential. Note that this goal is written in terms of direct benefit for children. Remember the earlier discussion about mission statements included something about the intended outcome for the group of children being planned for. Since the example problem focuses on children's needs, its translation to a goal statement can be couched in terms of outcome for these children.

It is not so easy to do this with the second type. What is the benefit for children derived from coordination of services between groups X, Y, and Z? It will be necessary to further define the service areas that require coordination, i.e., is it screening, assessment, case management, direct services, etc. Once this is done, more specific goal statements can be made which address specific problem areas.

It is possible there will be no benefit. Coordination can actually be carried out in a way that it may cost more money and takes more time so the amount of resources directly allocated to children's services is reduced. The team must ask itself if it really wants to do that. It is helpful to examine this second type of problem statement very carefully. It should be looked at in terms of what is the problem for children. If lack of coordination results in some children not getting Service A, then the goal can be: To increase the number of children receiving Service A by improving coordination between agencies X, Y, and Z. The outcome is more services to children; the means is improved coordination.

There are at least two benefits to approaching Phase 4 in this way. First, all of the goals will be written in terms of direct benefits for children. When the team faces an evaluation of its efforts, it will be more able to measure the results by looking at how many additional children were helped. It also makes action planning easier. Second, the process of examining the second type of problem or need statement may help to weed out problems the team really does not want to work on because they will not result in positive benefit for children. This type of examination also helps to define the actual problem more precisely. It

is too easy to assume that better coordination, more money, and more manpower will solve all the problems, rather than to define the problems in a way that helps children. It is more convincing to demonstrate that 60 children need Service A and they can get it through Action Plan 5, than it is to say that services need to be better coordinated. It should be more rewarding too.

Sometimes it is difficult for a group to figure out how to get started on developing strategies or steps to achieve certain objectives. This is usually because of the complex circumstances in the community that may impinge on action toward achieving the objective. FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS is a technique that can be used to overcome the problem of how to get started.

Take, for example, the following objective: "By September, 1982, provide individualized educational programs for 60 handicapped children through encouraging the Galactic School System to develop and conduct a pre-school program." Let us say that the Director of Special Education of the School System is on the community team and wants to develop such a program. She/he needs help, though, in planning the best approach to convincing the School Board and administration to provide it. FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS can be used by the team to examine the possibilities.

To begin with, the objective is written on a chalk board or flip chart. Two columns are drawn below the objective. The first column is labeled supportive forces, the second, restraining forces. The group then proceeds to brainstorm about or two different forces, listing them in their respective columns as they came up with them.

Examples of supportive forces might be: The state has passed legislation allowing school systems to begin pre-school programs if they want to; federal money is available under P.L. 94-142 to help develop such programs; Mr. Brown, a school board member has a grandchild who is handicapped. The headstart program in Galactica can provide technical assistance on how to set up the program; classroom space is available in four elementary schools due to lowered enrollment.

Restraining forces might include: The School Board is on record that no new programs will be started due to limited fiscal resources; school buildings wherein classroom space exists are not barrier free; the Associate Superintendent for Instruction (who is the Special Education Director's boss) believes that pre-school programs should not be operated by the school system.

After all supportive and restraining forces are listed as they are brought up by team members, they should be analyzed in terms of weight or power. Then they should be re-listed on another page in order of their relative weight or power. The lists are then considered by the group. A first step is to consider whether the restraining forces so out weigh the supportive forces that trying to accomplish the objective would be too difficult. If so, it should be reconsidered, rewritten, or put aside until a later time. If restraining forces do not seem insurmountable, then the team can think about actions to reduce the effect of certain restraining forces. It also can think about ways to increase the weight of supportive forces. In this way, a plan for action for the objective may be initiated. A list of steps for Force Field Analysis is provided below:

Analysis of Forces that Relate to Objectives

1. Record the objective, being certain to indicate the time frame assigned for its completion.

2. List under the supportive column, all of the forces that exist which are friendly to the specified objective.

3. Under the restraining column, list all of the forces that are antagonistic to the objective.

4. After the supportive and restraining forces have been randomly listed, record them again on a new sheet in order of weight or power.

5. Scan the list of forces to determine the feasibility of accomplishing the objective. An overwhelming number of forces that are opposed to the objective may suggest that the objective is unrealistic and should be reconsidered or rewritten.

6. Make a decision whether actions should focus upon strengthening supportive forces and ignoring restraining forces, or vice versa. In most instances, it is likely that forces in both columns will be addressed simultaneously.

7. Review each force individually, specify actions needed, person or persons to undertake the actions, and indicate a target date for the action.

CHAPTER 4

HUMAN FACTORS IN INTERAGENCY TEAMS

Introduction

In any community effort, or whenever a group of people assemble to accomplish some goal, there is an array of human factors that effect how that goal is achieved. All of us have worked in professional groups where the experience has been either satisfying or disappointing, depending on the manner in which the group worked (or did not work) together. Understanding the process of how groups work together will be important for the community team. Although clearly the main focus is the content and tasks related to the team's goals, the atmosphere and dynamics of the group will significantly affect the results.

Human factors are ever present in all stages of the community team effort: planning, development and implementation. There is a strong need to develop trust, openness, respect, and mutual reliance in these teams. Team members will enter the process with varying degrees of fear, suspicion, and cynicism. To move toward formation of trust and acceptance, the interaction of the group must assist in developing self and group confidence and respect. In working towards achieving greater awareness and openness in the team, ambiguity, caution, and cover-up strategies must evolve into clarity, spontaneity, and directness.

Problems in team life can subvert the accomplishment of important tasks. Lack of responsibility, feelings of apathy and impotence, and competitiveness on the part of members can fragment and diffuse the energy of the group towards integration of group and personal goals. Individual members' relationship to control over the process of the team may also create problems for the team. Hostility and rebellion on the part of group members can prevent the group from achieving problem solving and mutual reliance. Sometimes special intervention is needed to steer the group towards greater creativity, productivity and cooperation.

Key areas that emerge as important factors in the success of community teams include leadership, role clarification, group atmosphere and the decision making process. There is usually a need for most community teams to attend to one or more of these areas through internal mechanisms or with outside support. The purpose of this section is to:

1) discuss each of these areas (leadership, role clarification, group atmosphere and the decision making process),

2) raise questions for community teams to ask themselves around issues that can emerge in each of these areas;

3) determine "red flag" indicators of the need for further help, and provide preliminary steps to assist inter-agency teams; and,

4) suggest available resources.

Leadership

The main function of leadership on a community team is to insure that the tasks necessary to plan and carry out the group's goals are accomplished. This leadership responsibility may be undertaken by one individual or shared by several members. There are several factors that influence what a leader does: how the leader became the leader; the expectation of those who designated the functions he/she would perform; the purpose of the group and the personality and role perception of the person selected to be the leader.

Leaders help groups to: 1) further define their purpose, 2) guide the planning process, 3) facilitate productivity and creative interaction of the group, 4) promote activities consistent with team goals, 5) clarify assignments and responsibilities, and 6) support action and change as needed. Team members usually become more involved and committed to the work of the group when leadership functions are shared by the leader with group members.

The styles of leadership on the community team may vary dramatically on a scale from laissez-faire, to democratic, to autocratic and the leader's style will significantly influence members' behaviors. Groups with laissez-faire leadership are usually the least productive while groups with authoritarian leadership are more dependent and demand more attention from the group leader. Groups with more democratic leadership tend to show more initiative as well as more ability to function without the leader present. The degree of control the leader exercises over the decision-making process is often a good indicator of the style of leadership on your team--from "leader-centered" to "member-centered".

Continuum of Use of Authority by Team Leader on the Decision Making Process

LEADER CENTERED						MEMBER CENTERED
---TELLS	----SELLS	----TESTS	----CONSULTS	----JOINS	----	

There are a variety of factors that can affect the pattern of leadership on teams. Contributing to this pattern are factors related to the leader, the forces in the group, and the situation. With respect to the leader, his/her values, confidence in the group, and own needs will influence his/her role. Forces in the group that interact include the group's interest and commitment to the problem, readiness to assume responsibility, skills and expectations of members, and roles of members in formulating the goals. The external situation such as the pressures of time, the organizational barriers and constraints, and the consequences of the team's actions further affect leadership patterns. For most leaders, there is a pull between "How democratic can I be" and "How authoritative must I be to get the job done effectively and to incorporate all points of view." Leadership and membership behaviors affect each other. Community groups should be aware of the effects of the dilemmas of leadership, the sharing of leadership responsibilities, and the impact inadequate leadership can have on the accomplishments of the group.

Questions for your Community Team to Address:

1) How is leadership identified in the group?

2) How does the group leader support the group process and facilitate the accomplishment of your process and tasks?

3) How is the leadership function shared effectively among members?

4) Does the leadership style in the community group enhance or impede the work of the group? How?

Assessing Leadership in the Community Team

It is sometimes helpful for teams to assess how leadership on the team is functioning to accomplish group goals. A simple way to explore leadership issues on your community team is to approach it from the end goal of an effectively functioning team. Problems in effective team functioning will give the team leader as well as the group, ideas in relation to areas that need "more leadership." A simple checklist such as the one on the next page (or more complete assessments in Team Building by William Dyer), can be a useful indicator of where your team may need greater work.

EXHIBIT 1

TEAM "LEADERSHIP NEEDS ASSESSMENT"

	YES	NO
1. Most members are committed to the mission of our community team.		
2. Our community team has formulated clear goals.		
3. The atmosphere on our team makes it easy for me to make a useful contribution.		
4. Our team encourages all members to participate.		
5. I feel our community team is productive in meeting its goals.		
6. Our team meetings are run effectively.		
7. I am clear about my responsibilities to the team.		
8. I trust the other members of our group as we work toward our goals.		
9. Most members feel good about being a part of this collaborative effort.		
10. There is recognition for a job well done on this team.		

This checklist can be used as a catalyst for a team to begin exploring problem areas. It can serve as a useful guide for feedback to the team leader on how things are going. Sometimes, team leaders are not completely tuned in to the feelings of the membership. This type of self-assessment can serve as excellent barometer to use in further team planning.

If leadership is a problem on your team, there are several RED FLAGS that will point up the need for outside consultation.

Is the leadership on the team overwhelming to most group members?

Is there an unwillingness to assume leadership on the team?

Is the group unable to confront the leader or resolve the issue of absence of leadership?

Role Clarification

On a community team, the question of "who does what?" is bound to come up and the answer is not easily achieved. Each member of the community team usually has a defined role responsibility - or job description - related to his/her responsibilities to his/her home group. Each member's perception of his/her role on the community team will be determined in part by the territory or "turf" staked out by that agency, group or individual. For most members, responsibilities to the community team will be less clear; members may not be sure of what they should be doing themselves or what to expect of other members.

An important aspect of community team development is the clarification of responsibilities and expectations of team members. In a sense, each member now has a "second master" and must learn to balance demands of the community team with responsibilities to the home agency or group. Clarifying boundaries and sharing of overlapping territories is an important negotiation among team members. Developing trust among members will allow for a more open communication with less ambiguous statements about participants' roles. Sometimes there are very real fiscal and other ramifications for participants that will inhibit their flexibility - and the community team must become aware of these.

Becoming sensitive to each member's limitations and group mandates will be necessary for effective team functioning. Team members need time to define and develop their roles in the community team. Conflict resolution is more easily accomplished when members are clear about their functions and responsibilities. Because so much community collaboration has to do with sharing responsibilities and pooling strengths and capabilities, it is especially important that there be sufficient time on the team devoted to clarifying the flexibilities and limitations of team members.

Questions for the Community Team to Address

1) Is there conflict on the team that is related to inadequate role clarification? What is it about?

2) Are there team members who are not meeting other team members' expectations of them?

3) What turf (if any) is difficult to share on the team?

Problem Assessment and Sample Intervention Strategy

A simple process for examining and intervening in role definition problems has been developed for use with health teams and is very pertinent to community collaboration. The process has four basic steps:

Step 1 - Sharing mutual role expectations by writing "role messages"

Step 2 - Identifying role ambiguities and conflicts generated in the role messages

Step 3 - Discussing alternatives and negotiating the most realistic, best solution

Step 4 - Implementing a "role agreement" that specifies role expectations and commitments

A role message basically is a written note to a fellow group member (and one should be written by each community team member for every other team member) as in Exhibit 2. Role messages should be shared with each team member who can draw-up a tally for him/herself in each eategory (more of, same of, less of) with a column for his/her response. This helps each member to identify problem areas. The input and response form the basis of negotiating sessions with the entire team to develop agreements about role functions. For more details on this process read: Modules Four and Five in Improving the Coordination of Care: A Program for Health Team Development by I. Rubin, M. Plovnick and R. Fry. This type of process is very helpful in diffusing conflicts around roles and developing productive solutions.

EXHIBIT 2

ROLE MESSAGE FORMAT

TO:

FROM:

In order to help me _____ (fill in whatever is appropriate to any of the group tasks)

I need you to do:

1. More of: _____

2. Same as: _____

3. Less of: _____

Sometimes community teams need outside resources to help with role clarification problems. The following are some potential RED FLAGS.

> Is tension related to role function on the team too difficult to solve during the meeting itself?
>
> Is there open hostility around turf issues?
>
> Are team members unable to accomplish role negotiation among themselves?

Group Atmosphere and the Decision Making Process

The atmosphere of the community team is the collective expression of group members' feelings about the life of the group. The atmosphere of the group is related to the types and diversity of roles individual members plays in terms of the tasks of the team and its emotional climate. A goal for most teams is a comfortable relaxed environment where members are interested and involved in the task.

Unfortunately, in some groups, tension may arise because hostility, apathy, or other nonfunctional member behaviors contribute to disrupting the problem-solving process. Members can become inpatient with each other, attack each other's ideas before they are completely expressed, take sides or complain about the leadership. Members may become apathetic when they feel they play little role in the final decision, when the group has poor procedures for decision making, when some members dominate the interaction of the group, or when the task at hand seem unimportant. Frequent lateness and absences, doodling and restlessness, all are expressions of this. To mobilize the energy of the group, the team leader and group members must look for the underlying causes of the nonfunctional behaviors.

Often the atmosphere of the group and the behavior of individuals in the group is tied to the type of decision making process in which the team engages. Making satisfactory decisions can be difficult for a community team. Sometimes decisions are reached too hastily, members may change their minds, or the group may be unable to reach a decision. In making effective decisions, members may play different roles. Related to the task, members must participate in giving or seeking suggestions, information or opinions, and elaborating, coordinating, or summarizing ideas for the group. Related to the emotional life of the group, members are needed to encourage other members, show solidarity, express tension release through laughter or joking, express the groups'

feelings or mediate in conflict situations. Teams that are effective usually have members who can fill a diversity of these roles. Members must feel as if they contribute something that is essential to the decision making process to maintain their commitment.

Questions for Your Community Team to Address:

1. How is the atmosphere of the community team conducive or not conducive to your active participation on the team?

2. What is the level of commitment of team members to the mission of the community team?

3. What is the level of trust and respect on the team among members?

4. Do most members participate in important decisions? What members get left out? Why?

5. To what extent are members satisfied with the process and outcomes of the problems-solving approach of the community team?

6. To what extent are you as a group member maximizing your potential to contribute to the decision making process?

A Strategy for Examining Member Contributions to the Decision Making Process

Groups working together sometimes find it helpful to pause to take a look at their own decision making process and the parts different members play in developing solutions to problems. Sometimes the way we see ourselves is different from the way others perceive our participation. An exercise that can be helpful to the community team to explore its process is for each team member to assess his/her own behavior and for the group to provide a profile of the group's perceptions of members' contributions to the team.

First individual members on the team can complete their own personal profile with respect to the ways they see their functioning on the team regarding the tasks of the team and the atmosphere of the group, (Exhibit 3, Column 1) then each member can tabulate the perceptions other members have shared about him/her (Exhibit 3, Column 2).

EXHIBIT 3

PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE KINDS OF
CONTRIBUTIONS I MAKE TO MY TEAM

Types of Contribution Related to Our Task	I see myself as good at	Others see me as good at
Initiating		
Giving Suggestions		
Giving Opinions		
Giving Information		
Seeking Suggestions		
Seeking Opinions		
Seeking Information		
Elaborating and Clarifying		
Summarizing		

Types of Contributions Related to Our Team		
Encouraging		
Harmonizing		
Compromising		
Relieving Tensions		
Supporting Other Members		

After completing a personal profile, then each community team member should complete a profile for the community team as a whole.

EXHIBIT 4

MY PROFILE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

OTHER TEAM MEMBERS MAKE

Types of Contributions Related to Our Task	The Individuals Who Are Good at This on Our Team are:
Initiating	
Giving Suggestions	
Giving Opinions	
Giving Information	
Seeking Suggestions	
Seeking Opinions	
Seeking Information	
Elaborating and Clarifying	
Summarizing	

EXHIBIT 4 (Cont.)

Types of Contributions Related to Our Team Atmosphere	The Individuals Who Are Good at This on Our Team are
Encouraging	
Harmonizing	
Compromising	
Relieving Tensions	
Supporting Other Members	

Someone would tally the group profile and present a consolidated picture of how members of the team perceive each other.

Sample:

Type of Contribution	Tally Profile
Initiating:	Tom (4), Barbara (2), Jim (8)
Giving Suggestions:	Carolyn (6), Tom (2), Alice (1)

The tallied profile can be used by individual members to see how congruent their self-perceptions are with other members' perceptions of their contributions. This can help individuals look at their areas of strength and identify areas for personal growth. For example, if a member finds that others see him/her as mainly task-oriented, he/she might attempt some new types of contributions that enhance group atmosphere such as encouraging, harmonizing, etc.

A second way the group profile tally can be used is to examine areas of strength and deficit on the team. Is there a balance between members who provide task and group atmosphere types of contributions? Are there areas of vacuum? Are group members stereotyped in their behaviors? This kind of exercise can be useful in beginning to look at the process of the community team and beginning to look at ways to improve the process.

In examining the atmosphere and decision making process of the community team, there may be RED FLAGS that indicate the need for outside consultation.

Is there widespread apathy in the team rendering it ineffective?

Is there conflict within the team that continuously prevents the team from resolving issues or focusing on the task?

Are team members rapidly losing interest in the work of the group?

Is the community team continuously unable to reach effective decisions?

Does your team spend a lot of time on problems/issues without taking any action steps?

Suggested Resources

To assist community teams, there are a variety of resources that are available to examine team functioning and to assist in building a stronger team. Some of those resources are within the community team itself - and the team should look first to its own team members who may be skilled in understanding group process. They can aid in facilitation within the team or they can help you locate local resources for help.

If the team does need help around team building, there are programs and consultants that exist expressly to provide this kind of support. Finding the right resources for your team may take some investigation. Sometimes there are sources in the community, or nearby that may not be costly. Places to contact to try to identify resources that may aid the team with its team process include:

- the local mental health center
- the local school system
- the regional or state mental health and educational agency
- a continuing education center in the area
- university faculty in social and industrial psychology, business administration, educational psychology.

Along with these resources are national groups that have special programs and consultant networks specifically to assist team development.

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